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Letter dated 9 September 2008 from the Secretary-General to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to convey the attached communication dated 22 August 2008 which I received from the Deputy Secretary-General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would bring it to the attention of the members of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) **Ban** Ki-moon

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Annex

Letter dated 22 August 2008 from the Deputy Secretary-General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization to the Secretary-General

[Original: English]

In accordance with United Nations Security Council resolutions 1386 (2001) and 1510 (2003), I attach a report on the operations of the International Security Assistance Force covering the period from February to April 2008 (see enclosure). I would appreciate your making the report available to the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Claudio **Bisogniero**

Enclosure

Quarterly report to the United Nations on the operations of the International Security Assistance Force

Introduction

1. The present report covers the period from 1 February 2008 to 30 April 2008. As of 26 April, total strength of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) stood at 48,357 personnel from 26 NATO nations and 2,328 from 15 non-NATO nations.

2. Throughout the reporting period ISAF has continued to assist the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan in accordance with relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions. From 1 February 2008 to 30 April 2008, ISAF has suffered 202 casualties in total; 30 killed in action, 149 wounded in action, 2 non-battle deaths and 21 non-battle injuries. Key themes have been:

(a) Operational focus has been to maintain pressure on opposing militant forces while maturing partnered relationships with the Afghan National Security Forces. The Afghan National Army has continued to grow in both size and capability. Combined operations, specifically in the southern and eastern regions, have served to challenge the intentions of the opposing militant forces and develop a more competent Afghan National Army;

(b) ISAF will continue to build on the momentum achieved from sustaining a high operational tempo during the winter months. Significant ground troop contributions by the United States of America and France will boost NATO capacity in the east and south. The Afghan National Security Force will continue to be given greater responsibility in the planning and execution of future operations. ISAF, partnered with the Afghan National Security Force, will conduct operations to expand the authority of the Government and provide security in order to facilitate reconstruction and development by the international community. The next challenge for the Afghan National Security Forces will be execution of a comprehensive security plan to enable a successful pan-country voter registration for the forthcoming elections;

Security situation

3. Opposing militant force activity throughout Afghanistan this quarter was influenced by significant losses to their leadership and safe-havens. The forces, unable to establish larger formations capable of fighting against ISAF and coalition forces, have focused most attacks against the Afghan National Security Forces, especially the Afghan National Police. Most attacks by opposing militant forces primarily involved improvised explosive devices. The opposing militant forces, which have attempted to consolidate fighters and leadership, albeit with ineffective results, have attempted to influence the ability of the Government to provide security and development and protect their lines of communication while simultaneously attacking the lines of communication of friendly forces. Regional security situations are as follows:

(a) **Regional Command Capital**. The Regional Command Capital witnessed a reduction in the number of attacks from opposing militant forces. The discovery of a significant number of weapon caches, particularly in the Surobi District, is viewed

as a positive sign of increasing cooperation with local nationals. Due to the success of the opposing militant forces during the Serena hotel attack last quarter, the threat of a "spectacular" attack against high-value/high-payoff targets remains;

(b) **Regional Command North**. Although there has been a gradual overall rise in the number of incidents throughout the region, the situation in Regional Command North remained stable although subject to occasional outbreaks of violence. The influence of key powerbrokers continues to prevent significant consolidation of the opposing militant forces in Regional Command North. Due to closer ties to the west and its northern border countries, Regional Command North experienced the first and majority of demonstrations protesting the Danish cartoons and the Dutch Member of Parliament's video critical of Islam. Although currently at low levels, political rhetoric has begun and is expected to increase, influenced greatly by the northern front;

(c) **Regional Command West**. Major portions of Regional Command West remain stable, in part due to successful regional control (as in Herat), and also due to the development efforts of the international community. Weather influenced the ability of the opposing militant forces to move and attack freely, with the majority of attacks being conducted against the Afghan National Security Forces. Portions of Regional Command West continue to be used by the opposing militant forces as lines of communication and staging areas for movement into northern portions of Regional Command South;

(d) **Regional Command South**. The majority of overall attacks have occurred in this region. Leadership problems within the opposing militant forces have affected their tactics and procedures. Nevertheless, cohesiveness among the opposing militant forces, and especially the Taliban, is still highest in the southern provinces, compared to the rest of the theatre. This is seen as a contributor to an increased willingness of the opposing militant forces to accept larger numbers of civilian casualties in terrorist-style attacks against public targets;

(e) **Regional Command East**. Combined operations (ISAF/National Security) continually pressured opposing militant forces during the winter period. These operations, along with coordinated security and development operations, continue to gain the support of local tribes. Although infiltration of supplies and fighters into the interior and indirect fires along the border with Pakistan are increasing, opposing militant forces continue to struggle with leadership issues, including internal fighting between leaders and tribes. The loss of influence in certain regions will become a focus for the opposing militant forces as they try to regain control.

Afghan National Army

4. Despite a high operational tempo, the Afghan National Army continues to make steady progress. It is projected that the Army will achieve established performance goals in accordance with timelines set by the Combined Security Transition Command-Afghanistan and the Afghan Government. Principle issues are:

(a) Capability. The Afghan National Army continues to show measurable improvement but much remains to be done before it will be able to conduct independent operations. The Army must show improvement in its ability to sustain combat operations, conduct logistical planning and plan for and lead operations if it

is to evolve into a self-sufficient force. Afghan National Army forces display an eagerness to assume more responsibility in the planning for and conducting of operations, and the majority of ISAF operations are combined with the Army. Over half of the Army units are considered capable of performing counter-insurgency operations with external support from ISAF and coalition forces. The first units have reached full operational capability, with more expected by the end of 2008;

(b) Manning. An increase in Afghan National Army manning to 80,000 has been approved. As of 30 April 2008, assigned personnel were approximately 54,000, with approximately 29,000 available for operations;

(c) Equipment. In general, the Afghan National Army equipment situation is gradually improving but requires consistent support for the overall development of the Army. Efforts by nations to support the Group of Eight lead nations in equipping the Army are improving but remain far less than needed. Further support is required to provide equipment as well as requisite training and support;

(d) Training. Persistent shortfalls in fielding operational mentor and liaison teams remain a significant limiting factor for ANA development. These small teams of officers and non-commissioned officers play a critical role in the growth of the Army through daily interaction with Army units. In addition, the lack of operational mentor and liaison teams indirectly effects the development of the Afghan National Police since resources that could be used for police development are prioritized for the teams. The generation of the teams remains a priority for NATO.

Afghan National Police

5. The Afghan National Police still requires significant development to meet desired level of capability. Although the police support the Afghan National Army and coalition operations to some extent, with approximately 78,000 personnel, substantial support from the international community is urgently required in order to enable the police to perform their role of enhancing security within Afghanistan. Coordination among international bodies involved in the development, training and equipment of the police is critically important for extending the authority and reach of the Government. This work includes:

(a) The requirement for additional police mentor teams, which serve as the police version of the operational mentor and liaison teams, is still a significant issue. Approximately 30 per cent of police mentor teams have been fielded throughout Afghanistan. Fielding adequate numbers of teams remains a significant priority;

(b) Focused district development, which has initially started in the seven districts, is the main ongoing project of the Combined Security Transition Command-Afghanistan with regard to the development of the Afghan National Police. The programme aims at enhancing the capability of the police; transforming the Afghan Uniformed Police into a service loyal to the Afghan people and Afghan national interests; building a "prosecutor-driven justice system"; strengthening the linkage between the Afghan Uniformed Police and provincial, regional and national leaders and staff; and developing the capability of the Afghan Ministry of the Interior by mentoring its leadership. The first districts taking part in the focused district development cycle are in the final stage of the programme and are going through the mentoring and validation process. The second cycle, which involves

five districts, is in phase III, and district policemen are undergoing centralized training in regional training centres.

Counter-narcotics

6. The link between the illicit narcotics industry and insurgency has been apparent over the reporting period, further fuelling instability and corruption, which threatens all levels of governance, including police authority and the wider rule of law. Ultimately, this also prevents meaningful reconstruction and development: within its mandate and resources, ISAF continues to support the Government's key counter-narcotics interdiction forces, the Afghan Special Narcotics Force and the National Interdiction Unit. The Government, supported by ISAF, has conducted a pre-planting information operations campaign that appears to have had some good results. ISAF has also provided logistical support to a number of Afghan interdiction operations.

Neighbouring countries

7. Events in Afghanistan have been influenced by internal politics and the overall security situation in Pakistan. The Pakistani military has operated with mixed success throughout the federally administered tribal areas and the North-West Frontier Province, both to suppress militancy and control the border crossing points into Afghanistan. Recent elections brought a new coalition Government into power. The new Government has offered to negotiate with militants as part of its proposed policy for economic and judicial reforms in the federally administered tribal areas that will form the basis of a strategy to tackle militancy. Current ceasefires with militants are likely, however, to contribute to the migration of fighters from Pakistan into Afghanistan for the summer fighting season. The Tripartite Commission, bringing together ISAF and the Afghan and Pakistani Chiefs of Army Staff, did not meet during the reporting period. However, work among the Commission's subcommittees continued.

Judicial reform and rule of law

8. ISAF visibility of the Afghan judicial and penal system remains limited. There is no significant change from the last reporting period. Evidence suggests that the penal system continues to suffer from overcrowding, corruption and poor record-keeping. There is widespread corruption with a general lack of awareness and understanding of the rule of law. The use of tribal or sharia law remains predominant. The following observations are made:

(a) Passage of legislation by the Afghan Parliament continues at a slow pace. The continued absence of legislation minimizes the ability of the judicial institutions to enforce the law;

(b) Formal state institutions of justice require renewed and more coherent efforts to strengthen and restructure. Several programmes are under way, with international support for the development of infrastructure and training of judges and prosecutors.

Disbandment of illegal armed groups

9. ISAF support for efforts to disband illegal armed groups remains unchanged. While the Government sets the pace of the programme and establishes programme direction, ISAF representatives attend weekly meetings of the joint secretariat to ascertain the support and assistance required. Such support is offered within ISAF available resources. The district implementation of the disbandment programme is currently in its third round of implementation.

Governance

10. Progress with governance remains slow. The reach and influence of the central Government remains limited. Corruption, a culture of impunity and strong tribal affiliations continue to undermine the fledgling parliamentary system stifling rapid process of necessary legislation. Key developments and challenges are as follows:

(a) The creation of the Independent Directorate of Local Governments has been a positive step in improving subnational government. The Directorate is a pragmatic recognition of the need to connect local people to the central Government and it emphasizes the importance of traditional tribal and community-based structures for local governance. In that context, it has mooted the idea of the Afghan Social Outreach Programme, which aims to make local communities more responsible for their own security. The programme also aims to provide security and development in return for loyalty towards the Government and cooperation against the insurgency. In theory, the Independent Directorate of Local Governments is responsible for the appointment of provincial and district governors and mayors. Since its establishment in August 2007, the Directorate has appointed 70 to 75 district governors out of the 364 districts. Despite its promising start, the Directorate is underresourced and it is still possible for appointments to be made without its approval;

(b) The continuing development of capable, honest, impartial and sustainable government institutions at the subnational level that are accessible to all Afghan people is critical to establishing the credibility and legitimacy of Government throughout the country. However, this vital process is hampered by antipathy towards the central Government, widespread corruption and a lack of institutional capacity in terms of both physical infrastructure and human capital. These problems will take time and continued assistance from the international community to resolve. A sustained improvement in the security situation is a necessary precursor to allow for the introduction of improvements in governance and development. However, the corrosive effects of corruption, nepotism and warlordism are rapidly eroding public trust in Government and these issues must be addressed.

Development

11. The absence of a poverty reduction strategy, agreed to by the Government and the international community, continues to hamper long-lasting and substantial progress within the country. While efforts are undoubtedly proceeding in certain areas, there is still a consistent concern for tangible change in the daily lives of average Afghans. This concern for governmental and organizational legitimacy, coupled with the potential for food insecurity, is of grave concern and must be effectively countered in the near-term through an integrated approach by all stakeholders in Afghanistan. More coordination of international efforts in mentoring

the central Government in effectively developing, prioritizing and sequencing its framework for the implementation of the Afghanistan National Development Strategy is needed.

12. NATO support to reconstruction and development efforts must also be increased through a more focused and coherent strategy of nations to support the Afghan Government development strategy. While provincial reconstruction teams continue to extend the reach of the Government and the international community, the coherence of their efforts must be adequately aligned with the National Development Strategy and monitored to ensure effectiveness.

NATO cooperation with the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan

13. On behalf of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), the JFCB hosted an Afghanistan Coordination Conference in Brunssum from 26-29 February 2008. The conference, which was attended, inter alia, by representatives of the Government and the international community, was held to promote a more integrated approach by the represented parties.